

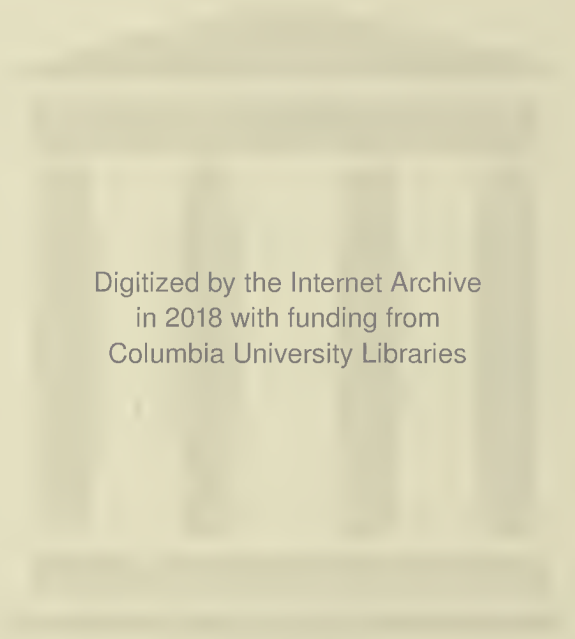


NEW HUMACAO HOSPITAL

Our
Porto Rican
Medical Mission
and
Central
Mission Hospital
at Humacao

American Missionary Association

287 Fourth Avenue, New York City



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Central Mission Hospital

Humacao, Porto Rico



OUR compact little field in Porto Rico is only forty miles long and a dozen or fifteen wide. It contains five towns of over one thousand population, all reached by automobile over excellent roads. The capital city, Humacao, is located almost in the center of the field.

Up to the present time the medical mission has consisted of one doctor who carried on a regular circuit of clinics in the churches of these main centers. Country roads are merely trails and the sick are brought in hammocks borne on the shoulders of men. The native Porto Rican doctor expects to remain in his office and prescribe for those who come to him with money to pay his fee. Medical attendance is practically unavailable for the poor. There are to be sure so-called municipal "hospitals," but in Porto Rican usage, that term means something very different from what we understand. To them a hospital is a sort of combined municipal lock-up, county poor farm and shelter for tramps and other desolate vagabonds. It is about the last place in the world where the sick get proper attention.

This itinerant work of our physician will continue as hitherto. Its true nature may be judged by a typical report of a month as follows: Number of medical cases, 1127; op-

erations, 6; surgical treatments, 22; dental cases, 92; total, 1247. Slight charges are made to those who can afford to pay, and apart from salaries and incidentals, the work has been practically self-supporting. Gospel services are held regularly for the people who gather at these clinics.

The new building, pictured on the cover, is one hundred feet long. Its walls and parts of its floors are of re-enforced concrete and it is roofed with asbestos shingles, so as to be virtually fireproof. It has cost about



BRINGING THE SICK

\$12,000. There has been a long struggle to secure the necessary funds, especially in view of the startling cost of building material and the difficulty of getting any material at all in Porto Rico under war conditions. It will be understood that the Association is not in position to include the cost of buildings in its budget, but must go out and seek special funds whenever one is to be erected.

The hospital is located on a hill-top, well above and back from the

excellent macadam road connecting the towns of the Eastern coast. There are about three and one-half acres of ground, formerly cane land; but the center of Humacao is only a half mile distant. Beautiful mountain ranges greet the eye in every direction and the town with its striking cathedral stands out quaintly in the immediate foreground. The building is congenial with its tropical setting and the site is conspicuous and attractive.

Though occupied and with funds in hand to complete the building



GOSPEL SERVICE FOR CROWDS WAITING
FOR CLINIC

and equipment entirely, there is still plumbing to be installed and the improvement of the grounds to carry out. When done, there will be a complete hospital, snugly quartered, accommodating about fourteen patients. As natural for the climate, spacious porches are a main feature of the building. At one end the crowds are received who come for the clinics. At the other end is the porch where convalescent patients

may glimpse through great arches the blue of the Caribbean Sea.

The hospital is, of course, the concentrated expression of the whole constructive effort of missions to improve social and physical, as well as spiritual conditions. The nature of this well-nigh universal need may be judged from the following:

“One of our young men, a member of our church, Sunday-school and Christian Endeavor, and in high school, was literally starving to death. A Porto Rican doctor told him that



THE ARRIVAL OF THE DOCTOR
FAJARDO CLINIC

he was anemic from lack of nourishing food. I have thought so for some time but he kept about in school and a little office work until a couple of weeks ago when he said he was not able to keep up with his class. The doctor had told him he must have milk and half a dozen eggs a day, but he had not a cent for these things. His mother is just a washerwoman with three children to support, all growing, and needing nourishing food. Well, the poor boy is

getting his eggs and milk now every day, and is 'coming back to life.' Two weeks ago he looked like a corpse, his hands were cold, yesterday he looked so much better and his hands were quite warm. Eggs are only two and one-half or three cents each, and milk is eighteen cents per quartilla (about three-quarters of a quart)! How can a poor person have eggs and milk? Even beans and rice, their chief diet are very high now. I suppose that since prices have gone up so, he has been eating only a little Porto Rican bread and



DR. SCHURTER OPERATING

drinking black coffee without milk.

“This boy also sleeps in a house ‘tight as a drum.’ Tomorrow I am going to help him fix one of the doors in his home so he can have it open at night, make sort of a half door at the bottom, so there will be a window. The house has no windows. Then we must get him some warm night clothes and a blanket.

“I have told you of this case, because it is a specimen of the conditions among the very poor here in

Porto Rico. They get small wages or are sick and cannot work, prices of food are very high now (because nearly all the land is in cane), they haven't warm enough clothes to sleep with their windows (blinds) or doors open. Hence many of them are anemic and are starving to death. It would make your heart ache to go among them and see these things, yet be able to do so little to relieve the conditions."

The success of the medical work is chiefly due to the cheerful and methodical energy of our able missionary, Dr. Maximilian Schurter, with the strong backing of his wife and associates in the Humacao field. Dr. Schurter has toiled prodigiously with inadequate native assistants, and we rejoice with him in the excellent facilities which the new hospital furnishes. When fully occupied, the staff will consist of physician, nurses, and pharmacist. The operating cost will be included in the regular budget of the Association.

While we write the word completion, we should at the same time look forward to the greater medical work which is sure to develop from the new facilities. Very complete and artistic plans have been made involving two additional wings for the hospital and a necessary group of residential buildings. The necessary funds for the first unit of these seem almost in sight. It will consist of a residence for the physician and family who now have to occupy quarters in the hospital itself. An effec-

tive bungalow design appropriate to the tropics and in keeping with the hospital has been chosen, and there is good prospect of getting it erected during the coming summer. This will be a refuge for a tired man, and give some privacy for his family. Later will come wings containing nurses' rooms and for the culinary department of the institution which should be taken out of the main hospital building.

At the bottom of the hill, there is a level space, furnishing room for a mission playground. The church, half a mile away in the center of the town, has no play space surrounding it, and Porto Rican homes are habitually built against the lot line. The normal development of Sunday-School and club work for children will thus be greatly advantaged by the use of a space provided by the hospital land. Most of the three and a half acres will, however, be put into food products during the coming year, there being considerable apprehension in Porto Rico as to famine from possible interruption of communication with the United States in event of war. It would be very helpful indeed if special funds might be provided now to complete the entire medical residence and equip the playground.

The completion of our hospital, rounds out the scheme of Protestant hospital provision for the entire island. Our field is at the extreme east of the island. The three largest cities are San Juan on the north,

Ponce on the south, and Mayaguez on the extreme western end. These four strategic points are now occupied by excellent hospitals affording in fair degree, facilities for all the Protestant missions. Porto Rico is blessed beyond most parts of the United States in the sense of solidarity between the Protestant forces, and in addition to our own splendid new hospital we feel proprietary rights in the magnificent new plant of the Presbyterian hospital in the capital city, San Juan. This new plant has cost over a hundred thousand dollars, and will be used by all the missions of the island for their more difficult cases.

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